

# Getting Into the Zone



photo by Peter Mersky

**Ltjg. Dwight Clemons**

**N**aval aviators have two types of jobs: the flying job, which we all enjoy, and the ever-present ground job, which seems to demand most of our attention. Too often, questions about paperwork interrupt flight briefs. After the brief, we dash to complete one

more task before strapping on the jet. We recently analyzed this problem and developed a simple way to stay focused before, during and after the pre-flight briefs.

At least one half-hour before brief time, aircrew shed their patches, just like they would before a combat mission. When the patches come off, every member of the squadron knows the aircrew are in their aviation zone; nobody should bother them about paperwork or hit them with a last-minute assignment. It is all about flying at that point.

We've found it to be an effective way to keep our aircrew focused on being combat aviators. It's helped us compartmentalize, and the whole squadron has ownership of this concept.

We also have placed more focus on the crew concept of briefing. From O-5 to O-2, every member of the crew takes some responsibility in preparing for the flight. This lets the commanders and lieutenant commanders bring more corporate knowledge to every brief. They have been able to spend more time teaching and sharing ideas about tactics, things you can't get from a book. With more people preparing for the flight, it takes less

time for the administrative portion to be completed. This allows more time for the crew to spend on designing a better training mission with better practice scenarios. *[For more on preflight compartmentalization, see "Is the Skipper in His Box, Yet?" in the May issue.—Ed.]* 

Ltjg. Clemons flies with VAQ-136.